AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-3.   (Canceled)

4.   (Currently amended) ~~An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim 2,~~
~~further comprising:~~

An image processing apparatus, comprising:

a first pattern detecting mechanism configured to detect a background dot pattern
embedded in a background image included in image data of an original image from the image data;

a second pattern detecting mechanism configured to detect a background dot pattern
embedded in a background image included in image data of an original image from the image data
and store the detected background dot pattern as an anti-copy background dot pattern in [[the]] a
memory; and

a pattern identity determining mechanism configured to compare the detected
background dot pattern with the anti-copy background dot pattern stored in the memory and
determine whether the detected background dot pattern is substantially identical to the anti-copy
background dot pattern stored in the memory;

wherein the image data is data obtained by a reading of the original image with an
original reading apparatus.

5.   (Currently amended) An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim
[[2]] 4, wherein the pattern identity determining mechanism compares a quantitative characteristic
of the detected background dot pattern with quantitative characteristic of the anti-copy background
dot pattern stored in the memory.

6.　　(Original)　　An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim 5, wherein the quantitative characteristic of the background dot pattern includes quantitative characteristic of a base area included in the background dot pattern.

7.　　(Original)　　An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim 5, wherein the quantitative characteristic of the background dot pattern includes quantitative characteristic of a message area included in the background dot pattern.

8.　　(Original)　　An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim 5, wherein the quantitative characteristic of the background dot pattern includes quantitative characteristic of a base area and a message area both included in the background dot pattern.

9.　　(Original)　　An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim 5, wherein the pattern identity determining mechanism determines that the detected background dot pattern is substantially identical to the anti-copy background dot pattern when a difference between quantities of the detected background dot pattern and the anti-copy background dot pattern is smaller than a predetermined threshold value.

10.　　(Previously presented)　An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim 9, further comprising an output preventing mechanism configured to prevent the image data from being output when the detected background dot pattern is determined as substantially identical to the anti-copy background dot pattern by the pattern identity determining mechanism.

11.　　(Previously presented)　　An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim 9, further comprising an output preventing mechanism configured to prevent the image data from

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being printed when the detected background dot pattern is determined as substantially identical to the anti-copy background dot pattern by the pattern identity determining mechanism.

    12-14. (Canceled)

    15.   (Currently amended) ~~An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim 12, further comprising:~~

    <u>An image processing apparatus, comprising:</u>

    <u>first pattern detecting means for detecting a background dot pattern embedded in a background image included in image data of an original image from the image data;</u>

    a second pattern detecting means for detecting a background dot pattern embedded in a background image included in image data of an original image from the image data and storing the detected background dot pattern as an anti-copy background dot pattern in [[the]] <u>a</u> storing means<u>;</u> <u>and</u>

    <u>pattern identity determining means for comparing the detected background dot pattern with the anti-copy background dot pattern stored in the storing means and determining whether the detected background dot pattern is substantially identical to the anti-copy background dot pattern stored in the storing means.</u>

    16.   (Currently amended) An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim [[12]] <u>15</u>, wherein the pattern identity determining means compares a quantitative characteristic of the detected background dot pattern with a quantitative characteristic of the anti-copy background dot pattern stored in the memory.

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17.   (Previously presented)   An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim 16, wherein quantitative characteristic of the background dot pattern includes a quantitative characteristic of a base area included in the background dot pattern.

18.   (Previously presented)   An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim 16, wherein the quantitative characteristic of the background dot pattern includes a quantitative characteristic of a message area included in the background dot pattern.

19.   (Previously presented)   An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim 16, wherein the quantitative characteristic of the background dot pattern includes a quantitative characteristic of a base area and a message area both included in the background dot pattern.

20.   (Original)   An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim 16, wherein the pattern identity determining means determines that the detected background dot pattern is identical to the anti-copy background dot pattern when a difference between quantities of the detected background dot pattern and the anti-copy background dot pattern is smaller than a predetermined threshold value.

21.   (Previously presented)   An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim 20, further comprising output preventing means for the image data from being output when the detected background dot pattern is determined as substantially identical to the anti-copy background dot pattern by the pattern identity determining means.

22.   (Previously presented)   An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim 20, further comprising output preventing means for the image data from being printed when

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the detected background dot pattern is determined as substantially identical to the anti-copy background dot pattern by the pattern identity determining means.

23.   (Currently amended) An image processing method, comprising:

~~storing an anti-copy background dot pattern;~~

providing image data of an original image;

detecting a first background dot pattern embedded in a background image included in the image data of the original image;

detecting a second background dot pattern embedded in a background image included in the image data of the original image;

storing the second detected background dot pattern as the anti-copy background dot pattern.

comparing the ~~detected~~ first detected background dot pattern with the stored anti-copy background dot pattern; and

determining whether the ~~detected~~ first detected background dot pattern is substantially identical to the stored anti-copy background dot pattern.

24-29. (Canceled)

30.   (Previously presented)   An image processing method as defined in Claim 23, wherein the determining step compares a quantitative characteristic of the detected first background dot pattern with a quantitative characteristic of the anti-copy background dot pattern, and wherein the quantitative characteristic of the background dot pattern includes a quantitative characteristic of a base area and a message area both included in the background dot pattern.

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31. (Previously presented) An image processing method as defined in Claim 23, wherein the determining step determines that the detected first background dot pattern is substantially identical to the anti-copy background dot pattern when a difference between quantities of the detected background dot pattern and the anti-copy background dot pattern is smaller than a predetermined threshold value.

32. (Previously presented) An image processing method as defined in Claim 31, further comprising a step of preventing the image data from being output when the detected first background dot pattern is determined as substantially identical to the anti-copy background dot pattern by the determining step.

33. (Previously presented) An image processing method as defined in Claim 31, further comprising a step of preventing the image data from being printed when the detected first background dot pattern is determined as substantially identical to the anti-copy background dot pattern by the determining step.

34-44. (Canceled)

45. (Currently amended) A computer readable medium storing computer instructions for performing an image processing method, comprising the steps of:

~~storing an anti-copy background dot pattern;~~

providing image data of an original image;

detecting a first background dot pattern embedded in a background image included in the image data of the original image;

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detecting a second background dot pattern embedded in a background image
included in image data of an original image;

storing the second detected background dot pattern as the anti-copy background dot
pattern.

comparing the ~~detected~~ first detected background dot pattern with the stored anti-
copy background dot pattern; and

determining that the first detected background dot pattern is substantially identical to
the stored anti-copy background dot pattern.

46.   (Original)   A computer readable medium as defined in Claim 45, wherein
the image data is data obtained by a reading of the original image with an original reading
apparatus.

47.   (Original)   A computer readable medium as defined in Claim 46, wherein
the original reading apparatus is a scanner included in an image processing apparatus.

48.   (Canceled)

49.   (Original)   A computer readable medium as defined in Claim 45, wherein
the determining step compares a quantitative characteristic of the detected background dot pattern
with a quantitative characteristic of the anti-copy background dot pattern.

50.   (Previously presented)   A computer readable medium as defined in Claim
49, wherein the quantitative characteristic of the background dot pattern includes a quantitative
characteristic of a base area included in the background dot pattern.

51.   (Previously presented)   A computer readable medium as defined in Claim 49, wherein the quantitative characteristic of the background dot pattern includes a quantitative characteristic of a message area included in the background dot pattern.

52.   (Previously presented)   A computer readable medium as defined in Claim 49, wherein the quantitative characteristic of the background dot pattern includes a quantitative characteristic of a base area and a message area both included in the background dot pattern.

53.   (Original)   A computer readable medium as defined in Claim 49, wherein the determining step determines that the detected first background dot pattern is substantially identical to the anti-copy background dot pattern when a difference between quantities of the detected background dot pattern and the anti-copy background dot pattern is smaller than a predetermined threshold value.

54.   (Previously presented)   A computer readable medium as defined in Claim 53, wherein said method further comprises a step of preventing the image data from being output when the detected first background dot pattern is determined as substantially identical to the anti-copy background dot pattern by the determining step.

55.   (Previously presented)   A computer readable medium as defined in Claim 53, wherein said method further comprises a step of preventing the image data from being printed when the detected first background dot pattern is determined as substantially identical to the anti-copy background dot pattern by the determining step.

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56.   (Currently amended)   An image processing apparatus as defined in Claim [[1]] 4, wherein the first background dot pattern is generated together with the original image.

57.   (Original)   An image processing method as defined in Claim 23, wherein the first background dot pattern is generated together with the original image.

58.   (Canceled)

59.   (Original)   A computer readable medium as defined in Claim 45, wherein the first background dot pattern is generated together with the original image.